

to promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which are in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: Toward a Christian Rural Civilization."

The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin

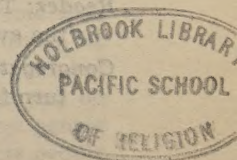
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THE GIANT OF THE WASTELANDS—A Pageant

By JOE H. CARTER*



Showing the results of man's neglect of the land on which and from which he lives;
Suggesting ways in which man can resist the ravages of the wastelands; and
Summoning man to a deeper loyalty to the laws of the Eternal God that deal with the land on which he lives.

CHARACTERS

LEADER

COUNTY

MINISTER

WORLD

THE CHURCH

YOUTH GROUP

AMERICA

THE LORD OF THE LAND

CHORUS

COSTUMING AND STAGING

Suggestions for staging and costuming will be found on page 4.

OPENING SERVICE

PRELUDE—(As the people are assembling it is suggested that the pianist or organist play melodies of the nature songs of the Church. As this is concluded the pageant leader will stand and make the following statement:)

LEADER: The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.

CHORUS: "America, the Beautiful."

INVOCATION: The Minister.

RESPONSIVE READING: (It is suggested that a sufficient quantity of responsive reading sheets be mimeographed as needed, and that some one other than the Minister be selected to lead it.)

LEADER: Hear, O my people: I am God, even thy God. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

CONGREGATION: Thou, O God, causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth.

LEADER: Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

CONGREGATION: The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine; as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

LEADER: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.

CONGREGATION: The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.

* The Rev. Joe H. Carter, D.D., is minister of the Central Presbyterian Church, Anderson, and of the Small Country Midway Presbyterian Church, both of Anderson County, South Carolina. The pageant was presented to the Anderson County Ministers Association Dr. F. C. McConnell, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Anderson, S. C. and the Reverend L. E. Wiggins, Superintendent of Anderson District, Upper South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church, and unanimously approved by the Association with the recommendation that it be presented in every church in the County on Sunday, May 21, 1944. Dr. Carter writes that the pageant was first suggested by a conversation with Mr. Robert H. Little, Soil Conservationist of Anderson County, that it has had enthusiastic and substantial support from agricultural agencies, that the cooperation of the churches of many denominations and faiths and races has been splendid. The Christian Rural Fellowship expresses its thanks to Dr. Carter for making the pageant available for publication in Bulletin form. (See page 4.)

Reader: For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.

Congregation: Let the earth open and let it bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I, the Lord, have created it.

Reader: All the rivers run into the sea; and yet the sea is not full; into the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

Congregation: The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

Reader: The earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Congregation: For the earth bringeth forth . . . so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations.

Reader: The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, and broken the everlasting covenant.

Congregation: If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

(A very important moment. The following statement should be made by a person who really believes that the soil is sacred and who can create an atmosphere of openmindedness and serious thinking)

PROLOGUE: The pageant you are about to witness deals with one of the great themes of religion, and the voices you will hear should provoke some honest and very serious thinking. Less than straight, honest thinking is unworthy of us. We are confident that every one will enter into the spirit of this pageant.

THE PAGEANT

Leader: The Old Book tells us that in those far off days 'there were giants in the land.' There is a giant in the land today. He is abroad in the earth. He is dangerous and destructive. No one has ever seen him, but when he passes thru the land there is always destruction, despair and death. He is the giant of the wastelands. But let others tell you about him. First we shall hear from one who speaks for all lands and all times. His name is World.

World: Long, long ago the Eternal God placed man in my first beautiful garden 'to dress it and to keep it.' What has man, with his great power and dominion, done to me during the long run of the centuries? Too often he has neglected and violated me. Stretched over my surface today there are millions, yes BILLIONS of wasted acres—land that was once fertile and productive. Man has been wasteful and ignorant—unfaithful to me, and most of all, unfaithful to the Eternal. 'He has dug the best of my coal and cast away what remained; blasted minerals and metals from underneath my crust, and left my earth raw and sore; boxed and bled my trees and abandoned the growth of limitless years to fire and devastation; exterminated whole races of my animals; choked my streams with refuse and dross; robbed my lands of their available stores; and exposed great areas of my surface to waste and destruction.' And today man's waste and neglect come to a Random Harvest as two billions of people must find their daily food in and from the land that is left. The Giant of the Wastelands strides and stalks across the earth.

Leader: Even the strength and surpassing wealth of the New World is now feeling the power and the peril of this Giant as his tragic shadow stretches longer and wider. The next voice you will hear will be the Voice of the United States of America.

United States of America: I am the United States of America. My natural resources are the wonder of the world. For generations it seemed that nothing here would ever give out. My farmers and foresters, my pioneers and planters, and most of my other sons and daughters have been deceived by the soft notes of this siren voice. *They don't realize that within my borders fifty million acres—once fertile and rich, now lie in ruin. Fifty million acres! Nor is this all. On my surface there are fifty million other acres that are in a condition almost as serious. One hundred million acres impoverished by loss of soil, and another hundred million acres now being wasted at an alarming rate!* What does this mean? It means that Americans, with the supreme inheritance of all the ages, have already wasted God-given land sufficient to form an area the size of Illinois, Ohio, Maryland and North Carolina; enough to provide an 80 acre farm for one and a quarter million families. Yes, the Giant of the Wastelands has already laid waste, in a land we call America the Beautiful, *over two hundred millions of acres*, and my people do not realize what has happened.

Leader: The voices we have heard have made us serious. The next voice we are to hear should *alarm* us. It is the voice of Home—for us, our own county.

(It is suggested that the cooperation of County Agricultural leaders or agents be secured in adapting this paragraph to each local county situation.)

—County: I am a great county, spread out in a favored region. I am — *thousand acres in size*. — *thousand* of my acres are in forests and pasture lands, and my farmers are cultivating — *thousands* more. This leaves — *thousand acres*. What about them? They are *gone!* Destroyed! Wasted! Think of it—*thousands of acres—lost!* Enough land to provide — of my returning soldiers and sailors with *an eighty acre farm*. Look long upon this picture of what has happened. Once happy countrysides, ghosts of the olden days, now silent save for the voices that murmur through the tangled wilderness of memories. Red, raw hillsides, washed gullies, wasted soil. The Giant of the Wastelands has passed thru ———County—and most tragic of all, he continues to pass thru, again and again.

ader: We have read from the Book of Life about the estimate that the Eternal God has placed upon the earth—how holy and sacred it is in His sight. It is not surprising that *the Church* has sensed the truth of the Divine Law of Sowing and Reaping. The next voice will be that of *the Church*.

urch: I am the Church. From the days when the Red Man roamed the forests of this far stretching land I have brought men together in loyalty and worship. Men have called me by different names, and have built for me with their hands and hearts many houses of prayer. Sometimes my house has been surrounded by people who loved the soil on which it stood, but now and then my house has been built where men and women needed *my soul but forgot my soil*. And today my life story can be told very largely by the way my people have treated the soil on which my temples have stood. Here and there is a substantial and well supported church, influencing my people for *life at its best*. Here and there is a dilapidated and run down church, its windows out, its walls drab, its people discouraged and defeated. In some cases my temples have been abandoned entirely, and families, once happy and contented, have pulled up stakes from land they had neglected, and moved away to land that others had preserved. Many of my thoughtful members have been giving these facts a lot of thought within recent years, and their careful study proves, without a doubt, that the Church has meant and does mean most to God and man in communities where people love the land and are faithful in keeping and preserving it—communities that believe it is wrong to injure a neighbor, and *equally* wrong to injure those who are to come after us to inherit this wonderful earth for their generation. And then, too, they have found that it is the hardest work to secure the gifts with which to carry on my world-wide task, and to give worthy support to the local Church, in communities where men are willing to take more out of the land than they put in—yes, communities where people have been unfaithful to the command of the Eternal God to care for and preserve the land that is His. One of my loyal sons recently put it in plain words—*“No one is fit for heaven till he knows how to treat the earth.”* I wish that all of my people shared this belief.

ader: The story we have heard demands an answer from *every* community and from *every* individual. We now come to the *turn of the tide*. There is a way out. What man has been placed on this earth to do he *can* do. He can, in the words of the Book of Life, ‘dress and keep’ the land, and, in the end, restore it to its former fertility and productive power. We have been the problem. We still are, but *we* are also the *answer*. We can *work* it out, but we cannot *talk* it out. The Eternal God who made the soil planned for its preservation in laws that are sensible and practical. There are not *two billion ways* to conquer the *giant of the wastelands*. There is just one—the *natural way*. The way of nature. Man is made for mastery and dominion. Working with Nature, in the spirit of cooperation with the Eternal God, man is made to have dominion over the works of *His Hands!* In the task of keeping and preserving the earth, man is made to become the Lord of the Land. Let us then hear the Lord of the Land.

ord of the Land: Originally this County was covered with trees. Vegetation covered the land; rain water ran slowly to the streams as clear as it fell from the skies. This is Nature’s way, and the nearer we come to covering our land with vegetation the nearer we come to the Plan that is Divine. We can use grain crops, hay crops, pasture grasses and plants to cover the land and provide life’s necessities. Years of study and experience have opened ways of controlling heavy rainfall by terraces that check downward courses of water by dividing the volume and gradually leading the flow to areas that are covered with vegetation, thus preventing washing, wastage and gullies. The laws of Nature call for minds that are orderly and practical. By practical study we have found out ways of preventing washing and wastage to our soil on which we plant row crops—one of them is a combination of terraces on the fields with alternate strips or areas of row crops and close-growing crops. It is commonly called strip-cropping, and its great success is to be seen all over our county. Another tried and tested method, known to thousands of successful planters, is *rotation-of-crops*. These days particular attention is being paid to having a crop to leave on the land on alternate years, to keep a good supply of humus in the soil and furnish protective cover to check the run-off of excessive rainfall. This practice is known as *cover crops*. Proper rotations, well maintained terraces, water disposal, the use of strip-crops—these will *reduce the loss of top soil to a minimum*. These good soil practices now in use in our own State and Nation, the help and advice from the agricultural agencies that our taxes provide, are available to every one of us. It will require all of these and many more ways yet to be discovered before final victory, but an honest and sincere effort on our part will help to win it. Every man responsible for *any area of earth* is a *part of the answer*.

ader: We come now to the most sacred moment of this hour. As our boys and girls, bringing seeds and plants, come forward to this earth-covered table, symbolizing the world-wide field, and deposit them in the soil, may we stand with them, and, in our hearts, pray with our minister a prayer of dedication.

Minister: Eternal God, The earth is Thine. We are Thine. The generations that follow us on this earth are Thine. We thank Thee for Mother Earth, and we promise Thee that from this day on we shall not forget that Thy soil is sacred. May we love it more and try harder to preserve it in its beauty and wonder and wealth. May we so live on Thy land that we can hand over to the generations to come their God-given heritage. These seeds and plants, representing the silent miracle of the farm of this whole wonderful world, we dedicate to Thee, as we humbly pray for harvests sufficient to feed and clothe the teeming, toiling, peoples of this earth. Amen.



COSTUMING AND STAGING

The characters in the pageant should be appropriately costumed. Flowing draped garments differing in color would be suitable for *World*, *America*, *County* and *Church*. *World* might carry a globe or wear a band with the word *World* printed on it. Red, white and blue material can be used to costume *America*. *Church* should wear white and carry the Christian flag. *County* can be designated by also wearing a band printed with the name of the county. *Lord of the Land* is most effectively represented by a real farmer, dressed as such, with a hoe (the posture differing from Markham's "Man with a Hoe" in every respect). The boys and girls can be dressed in farm attire. The pulpit or stage should be appropriately decorated. A large soil-topped table edged with green should be conveniently located to avoid crowding as the boys and girls come up to scatter their seeds. Ordinary dress for *Leader* and *Minister* may be used. *Leader* should be at side and in front, and as Characters are called and speak, they should take a designated place and remain on the stage so that all Characters are together on the stage when the pageant closes.

A WORD OF APPRECIATION BY THE AUTHOR

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all persons and agencies that have contributed to the preparation and publication of this pageant. The very interesting book, *The Holy Earth* by L. H. Bailey; a compelling article entitled "The Eleventh Commandment,"¹ by W. C. Lowdermilk; a carefully prepared study, "Land and the Rural Church," by T. S. Buie; An Order for the "Dedication of the Seed, the Soil, and the Sower,"² by James William Sells; a factual statement of Anderson County's soil by Joe B. Douthit. The very efficient and cordial cooperation of J. M. Dean, District Conservationist; T. R. Little, Soil Conservationist; Mrs. Frances Foreman, clerk-stenographer in the District Office; Paul Kowalski, Triple A Administrator; and Mrs. Virginia Dean Sanders, typist in this office. I am deeply indebted to Dr. F. C. McConnell and Reverend L. E. Wiggins (referred to in the pageant) for their valuable suggestions and their effective sponsorship of the pageant. The presentation of this pageant to the churches and people of Anderson County and neighboring area is a grateful gift to the generations yet to come.—J.H.C.

¹ The Eleventh Commandment by Walter Clay Lowdermilk, Bulletin No. 74. Single copies, 5 cents, from the Christian Rural Fellowship.
² An Order of Dedication of the Seed, the Soil and the Sower by James William Sells. Single copies, 5 cents each; 10 copies, 25 cents; 25 copies, 50 cents; 50 copies, 75 cents; 100 copies, \$1.00; postage paid. From the Christian Rural Fellowship.

Additional copies of this pageant can be had from the CHRISTIAN RURAL FELLOWSHIP for five cents each.